

## CHAPTER VIII

### ACHI BABA NULLAH

#### THE ACTION OF 12TH-13TH JULY<sup>1</sup>

(Sketches 9, 10)

##### THE PLAN

IN their June plan for opening the way to Achi Baba Generals, Gouraud and Hunter-Weston had proposed that, as soon as possible after the advance on Gully Spur, an attack should be made by the right-hand division of the VIII<sup>e</sup> Corps, supported by French artillery, to bring the Allied centre up into line. Shortly before General Gouraud was wounded he proposed that during this third attack, his own corps, in addition to supporting the British advance with half its artillery, should press forward to the right bank of Kereves Dere.

General Bailloud,<sup>2</sup> who succeeded General Gouraud in command of the French corps, confirmed this suggestion, and on the 3rd July it was arranged that, subject to G.H.Q. sanction, the new attack should be launched on the 7th. At a conference at Helles next morning this plan was approved by Sir Ian Hamilton; but on the 5th—the morning of the Turkish counter-attack—General Bailloud reported that the French artillery could not be ready so soon. The British had not enough howitzers or ammunition to support their own attack, and in these circumstances a postponement was unavoidable.

It transpired later in the day that, even if the French artillery could be ready on the 7th, the Royal Naval Division,

<sup>1</sup> Called by the Battles Nomenclature Committee "The Action of Achi Baba Nullah", and by the French "The Fifth Action of Kereves Dere" Farli Dere, unnamed on the first British map of the peninsula; was first christened "Achi Baba Nullah" by the M.E.F. Subsequently it was called "Mal Tepe Dere", and finally, after Turkish maps had been captured, by its correct Turkish name—"Kanli Dere". To avoid confusion the last name only is used in the text.

<sup>2</sup> Bailloud had hitherto commanded the 1st Division C.E.O.

July, which had been detailed to carry out the attack, would not be able to do so. There is a limit to the physical endurance of even the stoutest-hearted, and that limit had now been overpassed. A medical report called urgent attention to the fact that as a result of nine consecutive weeks of trench life, and the intensely weakening effect of the prevailing epidemic of acute diarrhœa, a large proportion of the division was suffering from mental and physical exhaustion: even men hitherto devoid of all fear had at last become affected and were in need of a complete change. Nor was it only the Royal Naval Division that was suffering in this way. Except for the latest arrivals at Helles, all units in the VIII Corps were in a similar state, and Sir Ian Hamilton himself had already reported that both French divisions ought to be withdrawn from the line and replaced by fresh troops. The 52nd Division, whose last brigade<sup>1</sup> had just reached the peninsula, was therefore the only division at Helles that was physically fit for offensive operations. Of that division, moreover, the 156th Brigade had suffered abnormal casualties on the 28th June,<sup>2</sup> and the 155th and 157th Brigades were entirely new to active service conditions.

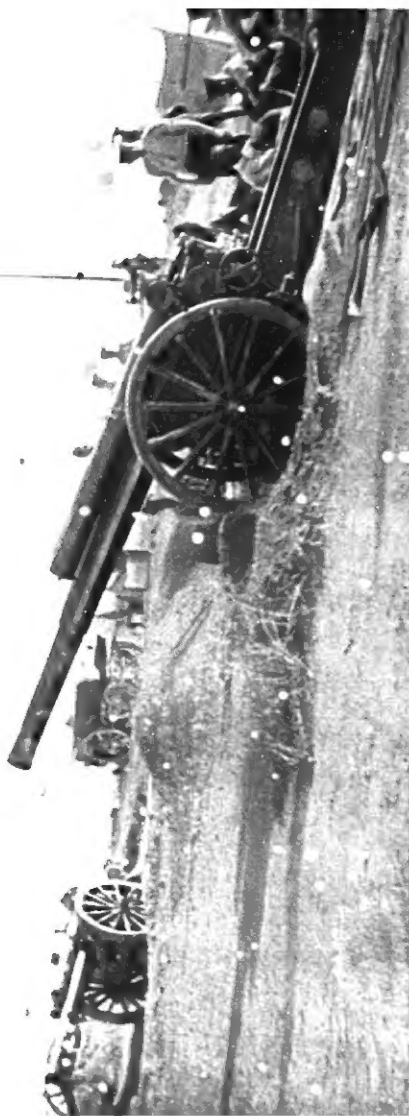
Sir Ian Hamilton had hoped to keep at least two brigades of the 52nd Division intact for the August operations. But he had now heard from Lord Kitchener that a fifth division would be sent him; and in view of the heavy casualties inflicted on the Turks on the morning of the 5th he was more anxious than ever to renew the attack in the south at the earliest possible moment. In these circumstances he decided to withdraw the Royal Naval Division from the line and carry out the attack with the 52nd Division as soon as the French were ready. On the 6th July it was found that the French guns could not be ready till the 12th, and the attack was consequently fixed for that day.

To carry out an important attack, almost unaided, as their first experience of offensive operations would be a high trial for the staff and the fighting units of a division straight from home. But Sir Ian had confidence in the Scottish Territorials; and it was further hoped that no call would have to be made on the 156th Brigade, which had suffered so heavily on the 28th June.

In order to give the 29th and 42nd Divisions some rest, while at the same time initiating the New Army troops into active service conditions, the infantry units of the 13th Division

<sup>1</sup> 157th Brigade (Br.-General P. W. Hendry). It reached Helles on 2nd/3rd July.

<sup>2</sup> It was still organized in two composite battalions and its strength was only 1,400.



COUNTER-BATTERY WORK AT HELLES

The gun on the left is firing at Achi Baba in Europe, the gun on the right at a battery on the Asiatic shore

were to be sent to Helles as soon as they arrived from England. July. The VIII Corps was warned, however, that these units were only to be used defensively, and that every care must be taken to conserve their energies for the coming decisive attack "elsewhere". The leading (38th) brigade of the 13th Division landed on the 7th July, followed by the divisional commander (Major-General F. C. Shaw) and some of his staff on the morning of the 12th.

Meanwhile a fresh anxiety had arisen in the southern zone. By the first week of July the Turkish fire on the Allied beaches and back areas had become a serious menace. The French corps, on the Dardanelles side of the peninsula, was particularly exposed to this fire, and the knowledge that all their base establishments, beaches and rest-camps were within effective range of the enemy's guns, and that General Gouraud himself had been wounded on V Beach, was adversely affecting the morale of the French troops.

At the southern end of the peninsula there were no "rest-camps" in the ordinary sense of the term, but merely small areas of ground, closely covered with a grid-iron of trenches to give the "resting" troops such cover as was possible from harassing artillery fire. Generally the trenches in these camps were dug roughly parallel to the Achi Baba ridge, from the summit of which they were in most cases under direct observation. Some of them were thus, as a choice of two evils, enfiladed by Turkish guns on the Asiatic shore. The trenches were seldom roofed in, for the scant supplies of material were needed in the forward lines; and the only protection which their occupants could obtain from the scorching rays of the sun consisted of blankets or waterproof sheets thrown across the top. Casualties in the rest-areas were normally just as frequent as in the front line. A large proportion of them were incurred in the neighbourhood of the latrines, where troops suffering from the prevalent complaint—feeling too weak to face the constant journey's backwards and forwards to their shelters—would often be lying out in hundreds in the open.

The incessant clouds of dust which smothered these rest-areas in the summer months, when the Helles zone was parched and dry and every blade of herbage had disappeared, made existence scarcely endurable. Yet, in one respect, the heavy pall of dust which overhung the toe of the peninsula was a positive, if unrecognized advantage to the resting troops. In clear weather almost every acre of ground in British possession was as plainly visible to the Turks as the lines on a large-scale map; it was the dusty haze alone which concealed movement.

**July.** The objective for the Allied attack on the 12th July was the enemy's front system of trenches from the north-western bank of Kanli Dere on the left to the Rognon defences on the right. **Sketch 9.** The frontage of attack was roughly a mile, of which 1,000 yards were allotted to the 52nd Division and about 700 yards to the French. Opposite the British the depth of the enemy trench system varied from 200 to 400 yards. The trenches had been made in a haphazard manner, and their trace was irregular and confusing, with many curves and loops. Roughly they seemed to consist of three main lines—front, support and reserve; but in some places, and particularly on the two flanks, there was a veritable maze of small trenches, some of which, battered to pieces by previous bombardments, had fallen into disuse.

A marked and undoubtedly unfortunate feature of the British plan was that the 52nd Division's attack was to be carried out in two halves—the right half at 7.35 in the morning, and the left half, after nine hours' interval, at 4.50 in the afternoon. The reason for this was to enable all the available artillery to concentrate on each half of the objective in turn. If the morning attack proved unsuccessful, the afternoon operation was to be abandoned. On the other hand, if the morning attack was an immediate success, and if the enemy on the left showed signs of giving way, the troops for the afternoon attack were to press forward at once.

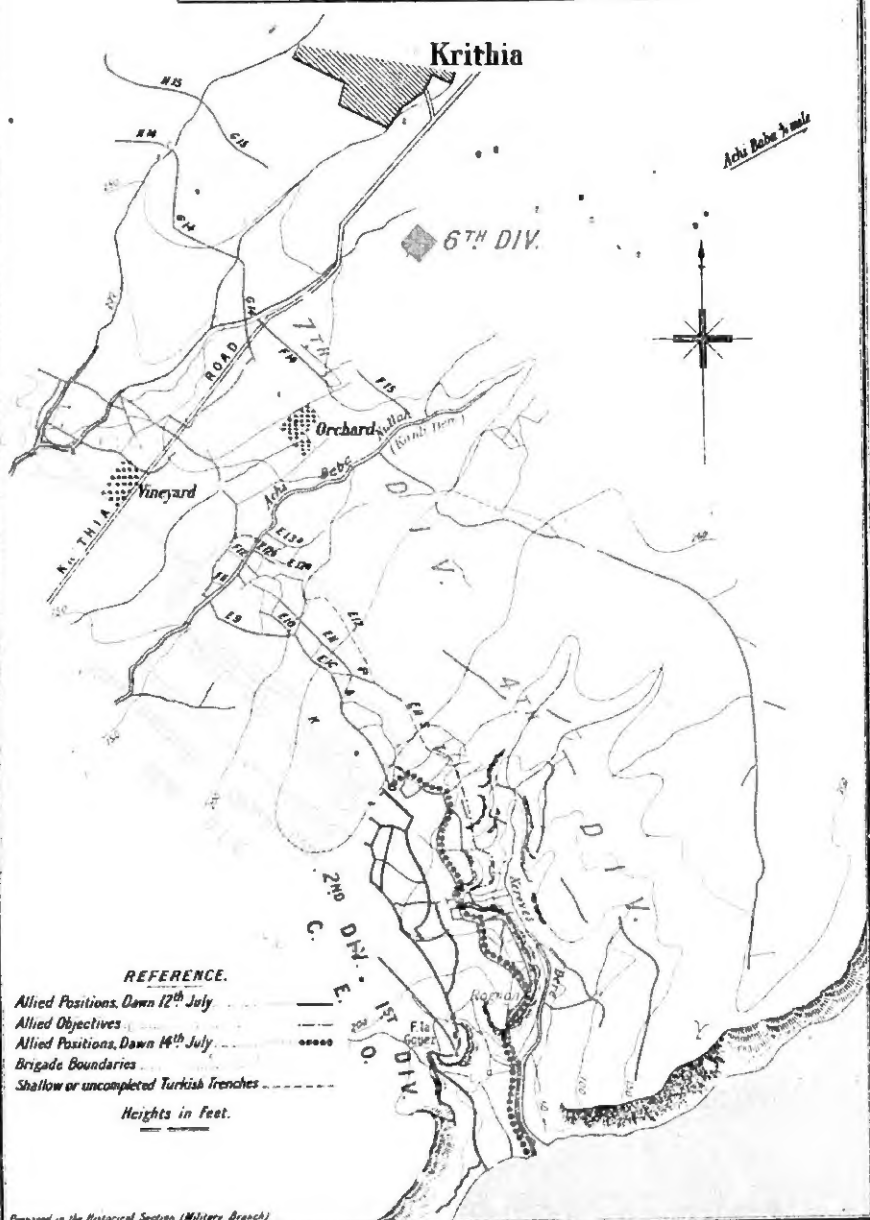
An obvious disadvantage of two piecemeal attacks on a narrow front, at such a wide interval of time, was the long nervous strain that would be imposed upon the troops for the second attack as they waited all day, in their crowded departure trenches, with a tropical sun above them, no shade and very little water. There was also the probability that both attacks would be caught by machine-gun fire from the flanks. To minimize this danger the 42nd Division on the left was to assist both attacks with covering machine-gun fire. To distract Turkish attention from the actual front of operations, the morning advance was to be preceded by a small operation on the front of the 29th Division.

General Egerton, in command of the 52nd Division, detailed the 155th Brigade to carry out the morning assault. The 157th Brigade was to attack in the afternoon. The 156th Brigade was to form the divisional reserve. Both attacks were to be launched in four waves, one wave forming up in each of the four lines of trenches of which the British defensive system was then composed. All four waves were to advance simultaneously, straight over the top, without firing. The first two waves were to occupy a line which roughly corresponded to the

Sketch 9.

# THE BATTLE OF THE 12<sup>TH</sup>/13<sup>TH</sup> JULY 1915.

SCALE. 0 1/2 1 3/4 1 Mile



enemy's third or reserve line. The third wave was to hold the July. second or support line, and the fourth to remain in the enemy's front line. Special parties were to keep in touch with the French attack on the right; "consolidation parties", with tools and sandbags, were to accompany the third and fourth waves; and other parties were to dig communication trenches back to the old British front line.

In the French sector only one attack, to take place at 7.35 A.M., was planned in the first instance. This was to be carried out by four battalions of the 1st Division on the right, and four battalions of the 2nd Division on the left. The French objective was to include all the Turkish trenches on the western side of Kereves Dere, between the Rognon and Point T (in the Turkish third line), where the left of the 2nd Division was to be in contact, on its final objective, with the right of the 155th Brigade.

On the French front of attack the ground sloped gently down towards the scarped banks of Kereves Dere. In the British sector, the right of the assaulting line was higher than the centre and left, which fell away towards Kanli Dere. Immediately in front of the British trenches there was a slight dip between the opposing lines, but the enemy's front line, on slightly higher ground, concealed the ground immediately behind it. Beyond the day's objective the ground rose again gradually towards Achi Baba, whose dome-like head frowned down upon the battlefield.

In the 52nd Division ten per cent of the rank and file, and all officers above three per company, were to be sent into reserve on the eve of battle so as to be available as "first reinforcements". The attacking strength of the division at the beginning of the day would consequently be 208 officers and 7,540 other ranks. The French troops for the attack numbered about 5,000 all ranks.

The morale of the Turks was again said to be very low as a result of their recent defeats, and a report had reached G.H.Q. that the Turkish ammunition situation was at the moment "most critical". That the Turkish divisions were disorganized and that the state of their ammunition supply was causing Liman von Sanders keen anxiety, is now known to be true. But it may be said at once that the hopes—frequently expressed in the course of the campaign by British higher commanders—that the Turkish infantry were losing their fighting spirit, was never once justified. The proverbial gallantry of the Turkish soldier in defence was never better displayed than in 1915.

As usual, it had been difficult to gauge the enemy's numbers,

July. for prisoners belonging to no less than 30 regiments had been captured in the southern zone up to the 10th July. It is now known, however, that the Turkish forces south of Achi Baba on the 12th July consisted of five weak divisions (approximately 35,000 rifles) and 94 guns.<sup>1</sup> Four divisions (the 1st, 11th, 7th and 4th, in that order from west to east) were holding the line, with one division (the 6th) in general reserve. The front attacked by the French was covered by the 4th Division, while the left flank of the 7th Division was opposed to the 155th Brigade.

In point of fact the Turkish *Second Army* had been ordered to the southern zone, and its commander, Wehib Pasha, younger brother of Essad Pasha, who arrived on the 9th July, had already taken over command from General Weber. The *Second Army* consisted of the *V Corps* (8th and 10th Divisions<sup>2</sup>) from Constantinople and the *XIV Corps* (13th and 14th Divisions) from Adrianople. None of these troops, however, had arrived in the south when the Allied bombardment opened on the 12th July.

Finally, it must be noticed that on the 10th July a new British air photograph disclosed the fact that on the front of the 157th Brigade the Turkish trench E12, which had hitherto been described as the Turkish reserve line and had been shown as such on the trench diagram for the battle, consisted merely of a few unconnected lengths of shallow trench which would offer little cover. A new trench diagram was made at once; copies of it were sent to the 52nd Division headquarters next day, the eve of the battle; and at 7.30 P.M. General Egerton was informed in a letter from the corps that the final objective for the 157th Brigade should now be the trench E11, which formed, on that part of the front, the Turkish second or support line. The brigade was to try, however, to establish posts in E12, to cover the final consolidation of E11. On the front of the 155th Brigade, it should be noticed, no change of plan was entailed. In that sector E11 appeared to be the Turkish third or reserve line; even on the new diagram it was shown as a deep continuous trench, and it had always been named as the final objective for the 155th Brigade.

These new orders reached divisional headquarters about 8 P.M., but by some grave misfortune the battalions concerned never received them. The orders to the assaulting troops of the

<sup>1</sup> 72 field and mountain guns and 22 medium and heavy guns and howitzers.

<sup>2</sup> These divisions had taken part in the operations against the Suez Canal and only arrived at Constantinople in May and June.



157th Brigade were not amended; and, as will be seen later, July. the two leading waves of the 1/7th Highland Light Infantry charged forward to occupy a trench which nowhere offered any cover, and in many places did not exist at all.

In order to prevent any maps or sketches falling into the enemy's hands, stringent orders had been issued that all sketches, including diagrams of the Turkish trenches, were to be destroyed or sent to the rear before the battle began. This unfortunate, and indeed unnecessary, order may explain the omission to issue the new trench diagram to troops in the line on the evening of the 11th. In any case, with all subordinate commanders trusting to their memories of a not completely accurate diagram, it was unavoidable that in the heat of battle the assaulting waves should lose their bearings and be unable to send back an accurate indication of the various points reached. This was one more reason for the confusion that occurred in the course of the battle, and for the inability of divisional headquarters to keep the corps commander informed of the actual progress made.

#### THE BATTLE

The sultry night of the 11th/12th July passed quietly. Though there was no moon, a myriad stars in a velvet sky lit up the opposing trenches. But the Turks remained inactive, and the British concentration apparently passed unnoticed.

The morning of the 12th was breathless. Sunrise was at 3.45 A.M.; and long before the sun climbed out from the haze that shrouded the Asiatic hills, it was plain that the troops were to endure another stifling day. Since the beginning of July the temperature had risen steadily. The intense heat was becoming a severe strain on the British infantry, and the thick khaki serge of the 52nd Division was ill-adapted to a Mediterranean summer.

On the 29th Division front the diversion to distract attention from the main attack was carried out by a detachment of the Royal Dublin Fusiliers an hour after daybreak. Two barricades were stormed; but in a quarter of an hour, the enemy had recaptured them, and the enterprise fulfilled no useful purpose.

The sun was beating down from a sky of burning brass when at 7.35 A.M. the bombardment lifted on the main front of attack and four long lines of British and French infantry scrambled over their parapets and pressed forward to the assault.

On the British side the 155th Brigade (Br.-General F. Erskine) was attacking with the 1/4th Royal Scots Fusiliers on the right and the 1/4th K.O.S.B., followed by the 1/5th K.O.S.B.

12 July. on the left. The 1/5th Royal Scots Fusiliers was in brigade reserve. In this sector the French high-explosive shells had done their work so thoroughly that the Scottish troops reached the enemy's foremost parapet with hardly any loss. But from that moment heavy fighting began.

On the right the men of the 1/4th Royal Scots Fusiliers found themselves engulfed in a maze of half-obliterated trenches. Enormous execution had been done in the Turkish lines, and some of their shallow trenches were filled with dead. But here and there strong parties of Turks were still holding out stubbornly; and heavy machine-gun fire was coming from the right flank. The British losses mounted steadily, and progress was very slow. Some of the leading troops pushed on to their final objective, only to find that, on this part of the front, contrary to expectation, the trench E11 was only half finished, and on the extreme right <sup>1</sup> did not exist at all. In less than an hour the Fusiliers had lost all their officers but one, and nearly half their rank and file. Touch had been gained, however, with the French corps in the Turkish support line.

On the left the 1/4th K.O.S.B. had suffered even more heavily than the Scots Fusiliers. Taking the first two Turkish trenches in its stride, the battalion seems to have overrun E11, which was here a completed trench very close to the enemy's support line, without realizing it, and swinging right-handed, made for an isolated trench about 500 yards in front. Out in the open they came under heavy machine-gun fire from their right flank; and after suffering extremely severe casualties, the remnants of the battalion fell back to the Turkish support line which by this time was occupied by the 1/5th K.C.S.B. In its gallant but fruitless advance, the 4th Battalion had lost over 60 per cent of its numbers, and the commanding officer (Lieut.-Colonel J. C. McNeile) and adjutant were both amongst the killed.

On the French front, as half the artillery had been lent to the British sector, the initial bombardment which prefaced the French assault was a great deal weaker than usual. Nevertheless, heavy casualties had been inflicted on the Turkish garrisons, and the western half of the Rognon was captured at the first rush. But on the left, as in the case of the British right flank, the assaulting troops only succeeded in holding the Turkish support line, where touch was maintained with the 1/4th Royal Scots Fusiliers.

Meanwhile at British brigade and divisional headquarters in rear nothing but vague and contradictory messages were

<sup>1</sup> Between points S and T on Sketch 9.

filtering through from the front. Staff officers and others sent forward to obtain information had not returned; and though it was believed that some of the leading troops were occupying the Turkish third-line trench (E11),<sup>1</sup> all attempts to get into touch with them had ended in failure. About 11.30 A.M. the uncertainty was increased by a message from the French that their left battalion had reached its final objective, but would be unable to stay there unless the British could come up into line. This message was inaccurate; but before its inaccuracy was discovered General Egerton sent up one of his only two reserve battalions to ensure that the trench E11, which, as we now know, did not exist on his right front, was captured and firmly held.

With the result of the morning attack so uncertain, General Hunter-Weston was for some time in doubt as to the wisdom of launching the afternoon attack. No definite information had yet come in; but fresh fighting had apparently broken out on the front of the 155th Brigade. The Scottish casualties had undoubtedly been very heavy, and the communication trenches were choked with returning wounded. At one o'clock, however, General Egerton, who, in answer to appeals for help, had now sent up his last remaining reserve<sup>2</sup> to support the 155th Brigade, telephoned to corps headquarters that both he and Br.-General Erskine "urgently hoped" that the afternoon attack would not be cancelled. An advance by the 157th Brigade would enable the 155th to consolidate the positions won.

General Hunter-Weston thereupon decided that the 157th should attack at 4.50 P.M., as originally arranged.<sup>3</sup> The French commander agreed to make a second attack all along his line at the same hour, and General Egerton sent forward his senior staff officer (Lieut.-Colonel F. W. H. Walshe) to tell the 155th Brigade to seize this opportunity of pushing forward simultaneously to complete the capture of all its own objectives.

The Royal Marine Brigade (Br.-General C. N. Trotman<sup>4</sup>) of the Royal Naval Division, less the Deal Battalion R.M.I., was moved forward from corps reserve to the Eski Line as a local reserve for General Egerton; but strict injunctions were

<sup>1</sup> At 8.50 A.M. General Egerton hopefully reported to corps H.Q.: "In front of 155th Brigade everything is very quiet, which looks as if we had got the whole quadrilateral [of our objective]."

<sup>2</sup> The 4th/7th Royal Scots of the 156th Brigade.

<sup>3</sup> The 7th/8th Scottish Rifles. With the departure of this battalion to join the 157th Brigade the brigadier of the 156th Brigade had no more troops left.

<sup>4</sup> As General Paris was on short leave to Mudros, Br.-General Trotman was temporarily commanding the Royal Naval Division in addition to his own brigade.

12 July. issued that it must not be used without reference to corps headquarters.

Colonel W. H. Millar, commanding the 157th Brigade, had the 1/7th Highland Light Infantry, the 1/5th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders and the 1/6th Highland Light Infantry in line from right to left. The 1/5th Highland Light Infantry was in brigade reserve. The French artillery bombardment, which began at 3.50 P.M., was heavy and accurate. Most of the enemy's wire was cut, and many of his trenches were levelled.

At zero hour the 157th Brigade went forward with great dash. On the right the 1/7th H.L.I. captured the enemy's front and support trenches without much difficulty, and the two leading waves, pushing on to the third line (the trench E12), discovered all too late that it was merely a shallow scratch about 18 inches deep. An attempt was made to hold this line till the trench in rear (E11) was consolidated, but so many casualties were suffered that at 6 P.M. the battalion commander sanctioned a withdrawal to that trench. On the right, touch was gained with the 1/5th K.O.S.B. in the old Turkish support line in the 155th Brigade area, but the portion of E11 which lay in that area was said to be held by Turks.

In the centre, the 1/5th Argyll and Sutherland Highlanders gained all the objectives allotted to it, and even consolidated two small trenches, E12a and E12b, in advance of E12.

On the extreme left, to the west of the nullah (Kanli Dere), the Turks were fighting stubbornly, and heavy casualties were suffered by the 1/6th H.L.I. before reaching the Turkish trench F12. The first troops to enter that line were driven out by a counter-attack, but after reinforcement by a party of the 1/5th H.L.I. the trench was again taken, and all the objectives on this flank were finally made good. Losses had been so heavy, however, that further help was now asked for. Two companies of the Plymouth Battalion R.M.L.I. (R. Marine Brigade) were sent up during the evening to reinforce the left flank, and as soon as they arrived the Scottish troops withdrew.

On the front of the 155th Brigade, meanwhile, General Erskine had not been able to renew the attack, and the situation on this front—especially as regards E11—was still uncertain. According to the divisional commander's report: "the most that could be done with troops exhausted by fighting and thirst was to hold on to and consolidate the ground gained, and this was done."<sup>1</sup> On the French front the renewal of the

<sup>1</sup> Br.-General Erskine, reporting on the inability of his brigade to renew the attack at 4.50 P.M., wrote: "The attack did not develop, probably owing to the mixture of so many units in the captured trenches also to

attack had ended with another slight gain in the centre and on 12 July the right.

At nightfall, largely owing to the very heavy casualties, the situation in front was still confused. Desultory fighting was still going on in parts of the captured position; and in answer to a call for reinforcements from the 1/7th H.L.I., a company of the 1/5th H.L.I. was sent up in support. But the trenches in that area were already overcrowded; and as the Turks showed no signs of counter-attacking the reinforcing company was withdrawn about 3 A.M. This withdrawal, as will be seen later, had serious consequences.

The general situation that night was not without anxiety for General Hunter-Weston. The 52nd Division was new and inexperienced; it had undergone a very severe strain, and had used up all its reserves. As a measure of precaution, therefore, Br.-General Trotman was ordered at 8 P.M. to move the R. Marine Brigade into the old British front and support lines, and to establish his own headquarters alongside General Egerton's at Backhouse Post. But, though ordered forward with his brigade, General Trotman was to retain the temporary command of the Royal Naval Division, and he was further instructed that the R. Marine Brigade was only to be thrown into action in the case of great urgency.

The Turks had suffered too heavily to attempt a serious counter-attack that night, but small parties were still holding out in places, and little was done by the 52nd Division in the way of collecting scattered units, re-forming companies, and reorganizing the line. Many of the men, parched with thirst and utterly fatigued by their first day of active operations, were nearing the end of their tether.

This was the situation when at 4.30 A.M. on the 13th, while 13 July. the senior surviving officers were still trying to link up their flanks and establish some sort of order in the captured trenches, a small trickle of troops, which rapidly became a torrent, poured out from the trenches held by the right of the 157th Brigade and rushed back to the old British line, followed by their Turkish prisoners, who were evidently determined not to be left behind.<sup>1</sup> Very fortunately, before the enemy had time to profit by this sudden panic, some of the retreating troops were

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"the effect of heavy shell-fire which caused many casualties amongst officers and N.C.O.'s. The result was that the men could not be induced to go forward. In fact it was reported to me that some men were falling back to the old British front line."

<sup>1</sup> The genesis of this unfortunate episode was probably an order to thin out the front line. The ensuing withdrawal of a few troops was misinterpreted as an order to retire, and quickly led to panic.

13 July. rallied by Captain G. P. Linton, adjutant of the 1/7th H.L.I., who led them back to the line. Captain J. Macdonald, 1/5th H.L.I., whose company was in reserve, also helped to fill the gap,<sup>1</sup> and in a very short time the line was again restored.

But though the incident had led to no mishap, a somewhat exaggerated report of it, which reached corps headquarters soon afterwards, increased the anxiety of the corps commander, who was still without any reassuring information from General Egerton as to the state of affairs in front. The only information at General Hunter-Weston's disposal at this hour—about 10.30 A.M.—was frankly disturbing. The newly captured trenches were not yet properly organized for defence; "troops" to the number of about two battalions were said to have bolted from the 157th Brigade front line in the morning; the trench E11 on the 155th Brigade front was apparently held by the Turks; and many calls had already been made upon Br.-General Trotman's brigade to help in clearing the battlefield and to support the troops in the line. Apart from that brigade, the only troops in reserve were two battalions of the 13th Division (which had arrived at Helles the day before, and were not to be used for offensive action) and one other tired brigade of the Royal Naval Division.

General Hunter-Weston had himself reported only a few days earlier that the Royal Naval Division was not at present fit for offensive operations. But the situation seemed to call for drastic action; and he now decided that, in order to forestall any attempt by the Turks to launch a counter-attack, these debilitated troops must be called upon to capture all the portions of the 52nd Division objective which were still in Turkish hands. He felt that the Turks had suffered too heavily either to make an immediate attack themselves or offer much resistance till reinforcements reached them; and if all the 52nd Division's objectives could be captured, the enemy would have no position within 500 yards of the new British line from which to launch an assault.

At 11 A.M. General Hunter-Weston informed G.H.Q. that he was "conferring with the French commander as to the possibility of completing the capture of the original objectives "with a fresh Allied attack" Sir Ian Hamilton replied: "I approve. Provided our troops have the go in them, now is the time."

<sup>1</sup> Captain Macdonald was killed later in the day. Other officers who did valuable work in rallying the retreating men and sending them back to the line were Major J. A. Clark, Portsmouth Battalion R.M.L.I., whose unit was garrisoning the old British front line at that moment, and Major Powis Sketchley of the Royal Naval Division staff.

Thereupon, the corps commander hurried to Backhouse 13 July. Post and informed Generals Egerton and Trotman that the attack must be renewed that afternoon, all along the front of the 52nd Division, by the three available battalions of Trotman's brigade.<sup>1</sup> The objectives would be the trenches in the 52nd Division's objective that were still in Turkish hands. As all the communication trenches leading from the front were said to be congested with wounded, the attack must be made "over the top", starting from the old British position.

At a conference with his battalion commanders, General Trotman ordered the Chatham Battalion, R.M.L.I., to attack on the right, with its right flank in touch with the French; the Portsmouth Battalion, R.M.L.I., in the centre, and the Nelson Battalion on the left with its left flank resting on Kanli Dere.<sup>2</sup> These three battalions were to assault at 4.30 P.M. The Royal Naval Division had not yet been given the latest trench diagrams. General Trotman did not know that the original corps order for the capture and retention of E12 had been amended on the 11th July;<sup>3</sup> and the final objective given to his battalions included the whole of E11 and E12.

News of this fresh attack reached 155th Brigade headquarters about 3 P.M. The brigadier was to instruct his forward units "to lie low in their trenches at zero hour, and to facilitate as much as possible the advance of the Royal Naval Division "over the top"

The infantry advance was prefaced by a sharp artillery bombardment. But it was impossible for battalion commanders to get their troops deployed by zero hour, and it was twenty minutes after time when the assault was launched direct from the old British front line. The advancing troops at once came under heavy shrapnel fire,<sup>4</sup> and losses mounted steadily.

On the right the Chatham Battalion could make no headway, and at 8 P.M. the 155th Brigade reported that nothing had been seen of its attack.

The Portsmouth Battalion, which was to attack the centre of the objective, swept over the old Turkish second line, now held by the 17th H.L.I. Losing very heavily, the Marines

<sup>1</sup> The Chatham (R.M.L.I.), Portsmouth (R.M.L.I.) and Nelson (R.N.) Battalions.

<sup>2</sup> It was known that some of the Plymouth Battalion were holding the line of the furthest objective on the western side of Kanli Dere.

<sup>3</sup> The VIII Corps and 52nd Division seem equally to blame for this omission.

<sup>4</sup> Many eye-witnesses speak of the inspiring sight of Lieut.-Colonel E. G. Eveleigh, R.M.L.I., standing, cap in hand, on a trench parapet, cheering his men forward like hounds into cover, and then dashing on himself. He was never seen alive again.

13 July. reached the unfinished and unoccupied trench E12, where, for the second time in 24 hours, most gallant efforts were made to consolidate this exposed line in face of a withering fire. But, as on the previous day, the task was impossible, and the survivors fell back to the old Turkish support line.

On the left, the Nelson Battalion also suffered heavily as it pressed forward in full view of the Turks. It reached its final objective in the neighbourhood of E12a and E12b, but only to find, as it jumped into these trenches, that they were already held by the 52nd Division. This very gallant advance by the Portsmouth and Nelson Battalions had therefore been of little or no avail. It had caused a total loss of 24 officers and 500 men, including both commanding officers killed,<sup>1</sup> and all that could be claimed for it was that it had provided a small stiffening of very battered reinforcements for the 157th Brigade. The existing communication trenches were certainly too congested that afternoon for a large body of troops to use them; but three hours later—after nightfall—the front line might have been reinforced “over the top” with scarcely a casualty.

Meanwhile on the French front the afternoon attack had met with better fortune. On the left, next to the British, no advance had been made; but in the centre the Turks had fallen back to their last remaining trench on the scarped bank of Kereves Dere, while on the extreme right French troops had occupied a long trench on the low ground at the mouth of the ravine. Another 300 prisoners had been captured, making 600 in all<sup>2</sup> since the opening of the battle.

About 5.30 P.M., while the afternoon attack was still in progress, General Hunter-Weston took the unusual course of recalling Major-General Egerton to corps headquarters and placing Major-General F. C. Shaw, 13th Division, in temporary command of the 52nd.<sup>3</sup> The situation thus created was remarkable. The troops in front consisted of the 52nd Division and the Royal Naval Division, all of necessity very intermixed. Br.-General Trotman, in command of the Royal Marine Brigade and to that extent under the orders of the 52nd Division to which it was attached, was himself in command of the Royal Naval Division. General Shaw, new to the peninsula, yet now in executive command of the battle front, had no knowledge of the troops or the ground or the situation.

At nightfall General Shaw sent forward his own staff officer

<sup>1</sup> Lieut.-Colonels E. G. Eveleigh and F. W. Luard, both of the R.M.L.I.

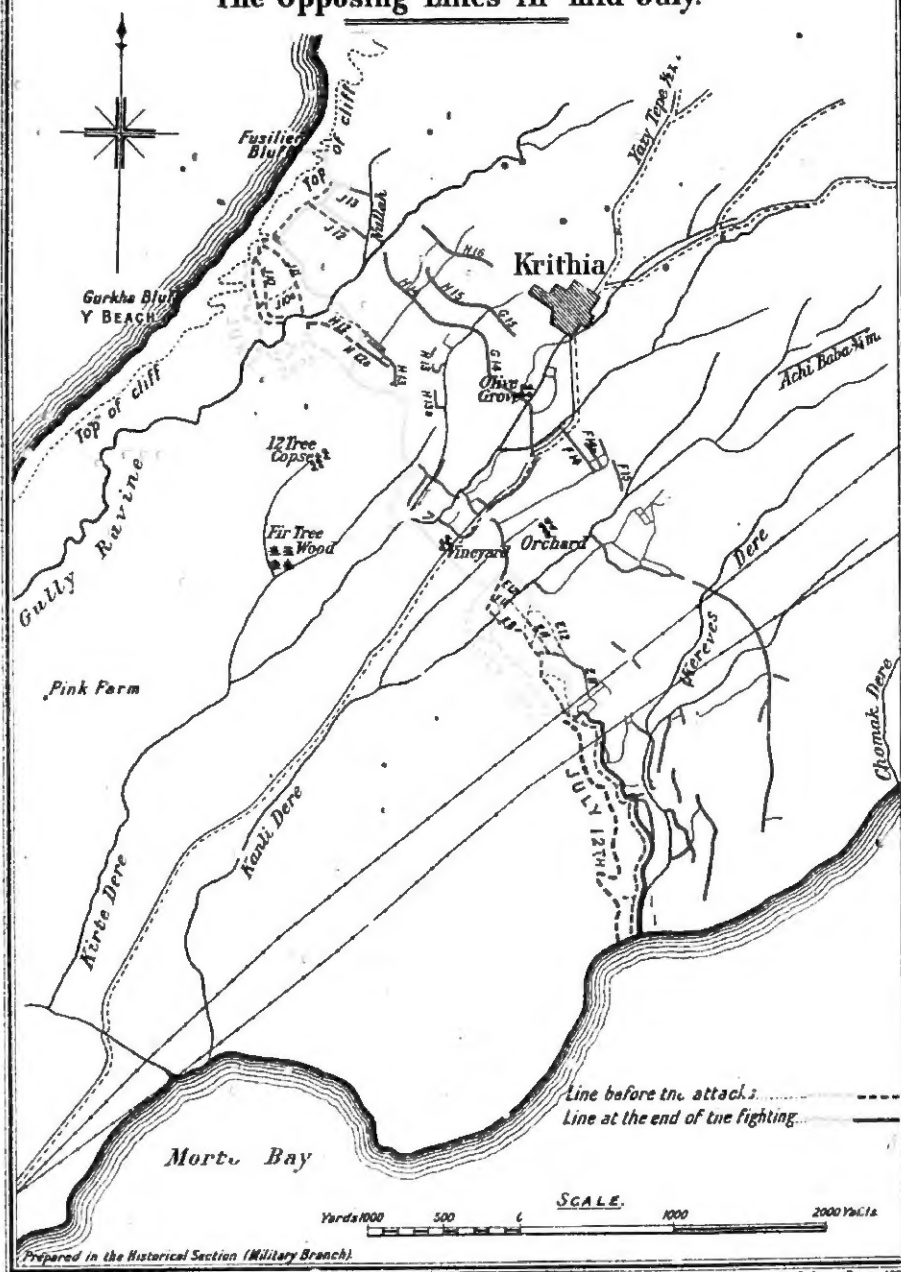
<sup>2</sup> The 52nd Division and the French had captured 300 between them on 12th July.

<sup>3</sup> General Egerton returned to his division next day.



# HELLES

The Result of the Fighting from June 28<sup>th</sup> to July 13<sup>th</sup>  
The Opposing Lines in mid-July.



(Lieut.-Colonel Webb Gillman) and the G.S.O.1 of the 52nd July Division (Lieut.-Colonel Walshe) to examine the situation. These officers, after a prolonged tour of the lines, reported next morning that they had found the forward trenches—particularly in the centre—very far from secure. In some places long stretches of front-line trench were entirely unoccupied. Losses amongst company officers had been very heavy; of those who remained very few had any idea of their whereabouts, or of the situation on either flank; and, though the men responded quickly to orders, they were all nearly dead with fatigue. The Turkish third line (E11) south-east of Point D on the 155th Brigade front was unoccupied, and it seemed probable that between S and T, if that trench existed at all, it was only very shallow.

Fortunately the Turks, after their very heavy losses on the 12th, were still in no condition to counter-attack, and throughout the night there was very little hostile fire. Early in the morning the Drake Battalion filled a gap in the centre of the line, and by daybreak on the 14th the position was reasonably secure.

After daylight the 155th Brigade, with its attached troops belonging to the 156th, was relieved in the forward trenches by the remaining units of the Royal Naval Division, and on the two following days the rest of the 52nd Division was gradually taken out of the trenches and withdrawn into corps reserve.

The two days fighting of the 12th-13th July had cost the Allied force very heavy casualties. The 52nd Division had lost more than 2,500 out of the 7,500 who went into action. The Royal Naval Division had lost 600, mostly in two battalions; and the French losses had amounted to 800. But the Turkish infantry—though this fact was not appreciated in the British lines at the time—had again been soundly beaten, and their casualties, as now admitted by Turkish official reports, had exceeded 9,000, exclusive of 600 taken prisoner.

In view of the approaching main offensive in August, and the desirability of conserving the energies of the Expeditionary Force for that vital effort, the wisdom of launching these three battles at Helles on the 21st June, the 28th June and the 12th July, has often been called in question. Their cost to the Expeditionary Force amounted to 7,700 British and 4,600 French officers and men, or a grand total of 12,300. But there is good reason for saying that these losses were justified by the cumulative results obtained, even though the main object aimed at—the capture of Achi Baba—was never achieved. The Turkish losses in the three actions, and in the counter-attacks which

July. followed them, are officially admitted by the Turks to have exceeded 30,000. As regards the concrete results of the fighting, Sketch the Allied positions on both flanks had been very greatly 10. strengthened; the British position on Gully Spur threatened to outflank the main Turkish line; a central section of that line had now been practically destroyed; and there were few Turkish reserves to occupy and complete their unfinished line in rear.<sup>1</sup> Furthermore, the hard fighting at Helles had distracted attention from Anzac, and pointed to an unchanged determination on the part of the British commander to reach Kilid Bahr from the south.

Once again, indeed, Sir Ian Hamilton had created a situation where an immediate resumption of the attack with fresh troops and an abundance of ammunition might have opened the road to victory. But the VIII Corps and the French had fought themselves to a standstill, and except for a few newly arrived battalions of the 13th Division not a unit at Helles was for the moment capable of further offensive effort.<sup>1</sup> Two days later the troops of the Turkish *Second Army* began to reach Krithia, and by the 20th July, according to the Turkish official account, the crisis was over and their line again secure.

At this juncture General Hunter-Weston, whose health had been undermined by the incessant strain of the past twelve weeks, was struck down by sun-stroke, and a few days later was evacuated sick to England.

<sup>1</sup> By 17th July all three brigades of the 13th Division had reached Helles and relieved the 29th Division in the left section of the line. Detachments of the 29th and 42nd Divisions were then sent for a few days rest to the islands. On the 21st, owing to a report that the Turks intended to launch a heavy attack at Helles, the 29th Division was hurriedly recalled. But no attack developed, and the month ended quietly.